DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 335 249 SO 021 149

TITLE	Peace Education, World Studies, Global Futures. David Hicks and the Project "Preparedness for Peace." Peace Education Miniprints No. 7.
INSTITUTION	Lund Univ., Malmo (Sweden). Dept. of Educational and Psychological Research.
REPORT NO	ISSN-1101-6418
PUB DATE	Dec 90
NOTE	14p.; For a related document, see SO 021 150.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Curriculum Development; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Futures (of Society); *Global Approach; *International Education; International Studies; *Peace; Social Studies; Student Educational Objectives; Teaching Experience; Teaching Methods; World Affairs
IDENTIFIERS	*Peace Education

ABSTRACT

This document contains an interview with David Hicks, an educator in England active in promoting the practice of peace education. (The interviewer was Ake Bjerstedt.) Peace education is described as a process that seeks to promote students' autonomy; foster debate and dialogue between students and teachers; and help young people to understand some of the origins of conflicts and various concepts of peace. The current state of peace education in schools in England, existing peace education projects, what teachers can do to teach peace, how teachers should be trained, and perceptions and misperceptions of peace education and related terms are among the topics discussed. (DB)

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ED335249

Peace Education Miniprints
No. 7
December 1990

PEACE EDUCATION, WORLD STUDIES, GLOBAL FUTURES

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David Hicks
and
The Project "Preparedness for Peace"

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PEACE EDUCATION, WORLD STUDIES, GLOBAL FUTURES

David Hicks
and
The Project "Preparedness for Peace"

This miniprint presents an interview on peace education with David Hicks, England. (Interviewer: Åke Bjerstedt.)

David Hicks has worked in schools and colleges of education. From 1980 to 1989 he ran the Centre for Peace Studies at St. Martin's College of Higher Education in Lancaster and was also National Co-ordinator for the World Studies 8-13 curriculum project. His publications include: *Teaching World Studies*, co-editor (Longman, 1982); *World Studies 8-13: A Teachers' Handbook*, co-author (Oliver & Boyd, 1985); *Education for Peace*, editor (Routledge, 1988); and *Making Global Connections*, co-editor (Oliver & Boyd, 1989).

Currently Dr Hicks is Director of the Global Futures Project at the University of London. David Hicks can be reached at this address: Global Futures Project, Institute of Education, University of London, 10 Woburn Square, London WC1H ONS, England. – The interview is reprinted from "Peace, Environment and Education", 1990, *1*(2), 38-47.

PEACE EDUCATION IN SCHOOL: A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID HICKS, THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

1.

ÅB: As an introduction, could you say a few words about yourself and your interest in the field of "peace education"?

DH: My name is David Hicks. Currently I'm running a curriculum project at the Institute of Education, University of London, which is on alternative futures. But for most of the 1980s I was directly involved in promoting the term and the practice of peace education. I became interested in that field as a result of my post-graduate studies with Paul Smoker at the University of Lancaster, where I discovered peace research, in particular Galtung's writings. I was very impressed and was interested in how I could adapt that and use that with school teachers. Having been a teacher in school, I have then been working with teachers in primary and secondary school for a long time.

So for nine years, from 1980 to 1989, I ran a small unit, called the Center for Peace Studies which was based at a College of Education, called St. Martin's College in Lancaster. Although this was sometimes misconstrued as being something broader and dealing with all aspects of peace and conflict, it was actually meant to give service and support to school teachers.

ÅB: I know that you have been doing project work on World Studies. Could you tell me a little about that?

DH: My initial idea back in 1980 was to set up this unit called the Center for Peace Studies in order to run various projects. In reality I came to focus on one project which was called World Studies 8-13. "World Studies" was the term that got used in England - I guess the American term would be "global education". The label 8-13 refers to the age range. While I think there are some differences between world studies and peace education, I see them both involving a common process in the classroom. I think I spent much of the 80s trying to disentangle what the differences were, if any. I tended to say to teachers that world studies began from a concern about Spaceship Earth or global interdependence, while peace education began with a concern for violence, both direct and structural, but that in the end many of their concerns were overlapping and very similar.

ÅB: Could you also say a few words about your present project on alternative futures?

DH: This is a small curriculum project, in this case funded by the Worldwide Fund for Nature. (All my work over the last 12 or 13 years has depended on money from trusts and organizations!) I have always been interested in the concept of alternative futures, but I felt that this could do with much more high-lighting than it has received so far. Also my feeling was that in peace education or world studies teachers had often become very good at dealing with the problems - very good at helping young people to understand problems of peace and conflict, global issues, but that one of the results of that often was in fact to *dis*empower young people. They became depressed by learning more about the problems. I think in particular teaching about the nuclear issues brought me face to face with that. The more we help young people understand dilemmas of the earth, the arms race, nuclear winter and so on, the greater risk that they are depressed by the end of it. It seemed to me that one way to give a more empowering experience to young people is not to ignore problems, certainly not, but to also focus on: Where do we want to go? What sort of world do we want? This means to develop young people's and teachers' capacities to dream and have visions, but also having done that, to come back very much to the here and now and to say: What does that mean about what I'm going to be doing in my community, in my school, at home, in relation to my local world and the wider world?

ÅB: Would this project mean that you are developing some exercises and material for teachers that show them how they can do this?

DH: In all my work I see one outcome as being very practical, usable teaching materials. The World Studies 8-13 project has produced two handbooks for teachers. The first one was called "World Studies 8-13", a teachers' handbook that has been fairly successful in the last five years. Last year we produced "Making Global Connections". Part of both of those books contained immediately useful classroom activities. I was also involved in a book on education for peace which was slightly different in that it dealt with a wide range of issues - exploring issues having to do with peace, conflict, race, gender, futures and so on - having just one or two classroom activities at the end of each chapter. That book has not sold anyway near as well as the others!

Coming back to your question: Yes, with my current project - which is actually called the Global Futures Project - part of my commission is to produce, at the end of a three-year period, teaching materials, either for pupils or as resources for teachers. I imagine that I will probably do what I've done before, which is to aim it at teachers for fairly immediate use in the classroom.

2.

ÅB: What do you think of first when you hear the words "peace education"?

DH: I first think of a process of education. Obviously most of my work has been within the context of classrooms in England and that colours everything that I say. Certainly when peace educators were very active during the early and mid 80s one focus was on the process: What do teaching and learning processes look like in schools, which are non-hierarchical, which promote students' autonomy, students' self-respect, debate and dialogue between students and between students and teachers?

ÅB: What would be some of the aims or objectives of peace education as you see them?

DH: Helping young people understand some of the origins of conflicts, understand manifestations of direct and structural violence, but also equally understanding concepts of peace: What does peace actually look like, what does it feel like, what does it taste and smell like, how do we know when we've got it? One part of that deals with encouraging young people's visions and dreams in as practical a way as possible.

ÅB: Would you say that you would cover both knowledge and attitudes?

DH: Yes. One of the things I used a lot with teachers on in-service courses and that I used in the book for teachers was a breakdown of knowledge, attitudes and skills, spelling out various substantive areas that I felt could be looked at, as well as attitudes that should be promoted and skills that needed to be developed.

3.

ÅB: If you think back on your own school days, were there some aspects in your schooling that might be considered an attempt at "peace education"?

DH: The answer is very short and is: No. It was a "good grammar-school education" in the 1950s. It didn't have much to say about either the process of peace education or the substantive concerns.

4.

ÅB: Do you believe that schools in your country, as you know them today, contribute to a "peace education"?

DH: I think the answer has to be: A little and possibly less than they did previously. I think that during the mid 1980s there was quite a significant, but small network of teachers, schools and local authorities in England that were positively promoting peace education as part of their everyday concerns.

Partly because of attacks by the political Right, but in particular because of the major changes that the Thatcher government has introduced in both the management of schools and the curriculum in schools, I'm afraid to say that peace education per se as a concern of teachers now has been almost totally buried by the everyday worries and concerns.

Having said that, I think I should add that many teachers who had specifically promoted a peace education or a world studies approach, would still be doing that, but I think without using the term "peace education". I also think that quite a lot of what goes on in what we would call infant schools (5-7) and in junior school (7-11) is about cooperative skills, learning together, working together, respecting each other, so I think that on one level, peace education *does* go on in a good primary school, but it is not necessarily called such, and it is not what we would consider a fully developed peace education, but some elements of it. And by the time you get to secondary school with all its subjects and the bell ringing every forty minutes to change rooms, anything related to peace education is much less likely to happen!

5.

ÅB: Do you think it is at all possible for schools to contribute to a "peace education"? If so, what are some of the steps and measures to be taken that you think of first?

DH: I remember that when I came to an IPRA conference in the late 70s and to the Peace Education Commission, there were several people who gave me the distinct impression that we could not talk about peace education in schools, that it would be a contradiction in terms, that by definition schools promoted structural violence. Schools are, however, quite a significant arena for debate, although it is difficult to introduce reforms. But obviously, I am not quite pessimistic. Steps and measures, in my experience, for empowerment can be good in-service work with teachers, for example, a residential weekend, where one has time with a group of teachers. They enjoy looking at their own practice and process, using the procedures of peace education as part of in-service. The sharing, the support, the debate, the dealing with controversy is something which many teachers find very stimulating. Whenever possible, we try to work with more than one teacher from a school. Obviously head teachers have an important role to play. Certainly I have seen in some places clear examples where good in-service work, supportive head teachers, and a positive approach from the local authority really did promote some exciting things in the school.

6.

ÅB: What would be some of the possible differences in peace education approaches among younger and older students in schools?

DH: I will want to qualify in a moment, but I think one of the main differences is this: Primary teachers dealing with the children from 5 to 11 will very much look at conflicts and cooperation and issues that deal with fairness or justice, that is, deal with the classroom climate and the school atmosphere. They will deal with conflicts in the playground, in the classroom, developing cooperative games for example. In the secondary school, however, it would be more likely that someone would say: Well, in history I am working with the relationship between the superpowers after World War II. Or: In geography, I am looking at issues of development and under-development. Or: In English, we are looking at some teenage science fiction stories about the holocaust or we are looking at poetry and literature that deals with peace and conflict. Having said that, I want to add that my experience also is that children aged 8-11 in primary school can be very interested in particular issues, both local and global, and in their own way are quite knowledgable, so I think there is a place also with younger children for looking at particular issues.

7.

ÅB: If you were an upper-secondary school teacher in a subject with which you are particularly familiar, how would you like to make the students more conscious of and more prepared for problems of peace, within that subject?

DH: I originally practiced as a geography teacher and I always used to feel that geography had a fairly major role to play in helping young people understand the world. If I was doing it again I would go back to the framework that I have often used and that I got originally from Galtung. He wrote somewhere once that the problems of peace have to do with inequality, injustice, environmental damage and alienation. I find that a very useful categorization. Geography tends to overlook injustice, but is very good at looking at environmental issues. I suspect geography doesn't look much at issues that have to do with alienation, although in academic geography considerable work has been done on, for example, the geography of crime and the geography of disease. Turning those four problems round, as Galtung once said, illustrates the values underlying peace. This is a way to help young people understand issues to do with what economic welfare looks like, what social justice looks like, what environmental diversity looks like, and what

participation looks like. I would want to spend much more time certainly than I used to looking at how those positive values can be expressed - case studies of those on different scales, so as I said earlier that students finish up knowing as much about the geography of peace as they do about war. There was an interesting book written on the geography of peace and war sometime back - for college and university students - and sadly that contained much more geography of war, but it dealt also with geography of peace. This is always the dilemma. I am very anxious to not get away from the problems, but pay *more* attention to positive examples.

8.

ÅB: In international debates, the terms "disarmament education" and "peace education" have been used, in addition to some other related terms ("global education", "education for international understanding" etc.). Do you have any comments and preferences as to this terminology?

DH: I know when I first came across the term "disarmament education" - I think it was in Magnus Haavelsrud's book - on the one hand I could understand that it was conceptually valuable within peace education. But I also thought that in busy classrooms and with busy teachers you don't start with that sort of terminology and that it wasn't helpful at all. It was difficult enough helping teachers to understand peace education, as a term they were not used to, without adding disarmament education as well!

The term "education for international understanding" I look upon as rather "wet". It has been used rather loosely in the U.K. for a long time. From the 1920s on there is a tradition in England of education for international understanding, but in these days we're more likely to talk about global education or peace education. I think people in England find the terms "global education" and "world studies" less threatening than peace education. It doesn't sound as subversive as peace education! Certainly the project that I was involved with - the World Studies 8-13 Project - had a much wider take-up than things I did under a peace education heading, and teachers sometimes commented: "I'm really glad that project was called "World Studies"; if it would have been called Peace Education 8-13, my head teacher wouldn't have allowed me to come on the course." I actually think that one can equally study issues of peace and conflict under a global education heading.

ÅB: Is the term world studies used generally in your country or is it fairly specific for your project?

DH: It's not used generally in the sense that most teachers would be conversant with it - unless they have come across some of the few projects that use that term. York University has a Centre for Global Education. They changed their name from including world studies to global education. I guess they felt global education gave a broader feel than world studies.

9.

ÅB: In many countries, questions related to disarmament and peace are highly controversial. Would you anticipate any difficulties, for example with parents or other members of the community, when introducing peace education in schools? If so, what kind of difficulties? Do you see any way out of such problems?

DH: That was certainly the case in the mid 80s in England, partly because the Right-wing press and Right-wing politicians argued that peace education was about nuclear disarmament and this made good headlines. The politicians from the Right and the newspapers made a big fuss about such things at that time.

I spent a lot of time during the 80s talking to teachers and governors. I explained that when we talk about peace education, we are actually talking about looking at peace and conflict, at human rights, at issues of development and at environmental issues. Many times after a session with teachers or governors, a person would come up and say: "Well, I am so relieved now that I know what peace education is about. Of course I am happy to promote it. I can now argue with people whereas before I was a bit worried. I thought that peace education perhaps was solely promoting nuclear disarmament." So my job was often to bring support to people who had relied too much on sensational newspaper headlines.

ÅB: Do you feel that this is still a problem?

DH: I don't think it's a problem now in the same sense: the nuclear arms race has gone out of the headlines, peace education has gone out of the headlines in England. The educational debate now is about the local management of the schools and about the National Curriculum.

10.

ÅB: What needs to be done in teacher training in order to prepare future teachers more adequately for the area of "peace education"?

DH: Clearly part of teacher training courses needs to be related very much to the concerns of peace education or global education. There were some

examples of that earlier. One of my early pieces of research in the mid 70s was about what teacher training courses existed that dealt with global issues, and there was an interesting mixture of geographers, historians, religious education teachers dealing with peace issues. But the mid 70s in England was also when teacher training was changing from a Teacher's Certificate to a Bachelor of Education degree, and with the tightening up that came in the B.Ed. degree, many of those courses disappeared. You would, I think, now only find them where you had an enthusiast in the college of education or university who particularly wanted to run a unit or a module on world studies.What I would like to see would be that for all students training to be teachers some foundation course existed under a heading of global education. I hope that may still be possible at some future date.

ÅB: What about in-service training in this area?

DH: I think that projects like World Studies 8-13 and other groups that promote global education have often given in-service courses which gained a high reputation because they were very participatory and enjoyable, whereas traditional in-service courses tend to be seen as extraordinarily boring, because university experts come in and tell teachers what they need to know and then go away again.

ÅB: Would such in-service courses be available to most teachers?

DH: Not now, because of money restrictions. I do know one or two Local Educational Authorities that are running world studies in-service courses now, but time and money constraints are very much limiting what is possible.

11.

ÅB: In many schools, the students represent a variety of nationalities and cultural backgrounds. To what extent would it be possible to use this fact as an aid in education for peace? Would you expect some difficulties in doing so?

DH: One of the things that happened in England was that schools that had a high proportion of children from ethnic minorities and therefore were very concerned about multi-cultural education or anti-racist education often saw peace education as being irrelevant to their needs. It was thought that the prime concern of school should be to combat racism and that very clear school policies needed to exist on that and very firm examples needed to be given by teachers on, for example, racist abuse and so on, and these teachers often had an image of peace education as being rather "wet". So it was often difficult to get people directly involved in multi-cultural education to also look at peace education.

The loudest voices in multi-cultural education were often those of black teachers, and the experience of black people in Britain both currently and historically has generally been a most oppressive one, and black teachers would often say to me: "Look, white people are not going to change unless they are confronted." As a peace educator I have reservations about confrontation, but I had difficulties arguing this with black colleagues. I always felt that I needed to respect their approach. So in fact, there has not been much of cooperation between peace education and multi-cultural education.

12.

ÅB: Sometimes the term "global survival" is used to refer to an area dealing both with the risks of nuclear war and with the risks of far-reaching environmental damage through pollution and overuse of resources. How do you look upon dealing with these two categories of risks together in school? Do you have any suggestions as to how the teacher could approach the problem area of environmental damage?

DH: I think they should both be dealt with - certainly with older pupils - and I think environmental issues can also be dealt with with younger people. I would go back to my earlier remarks on how do we help young people look at major issues like this and yet become empowered? So one of the things I want to do about environmental issues would be looking at what organizations locally and nationally are doing and why they are doing what they are doing, so that children understand for instance Greenpeace and local conservation groups and so that they can see examples of change occurring. Perhaps I would start with that and then say: Why are people doing this? - and then look back and see what the initial problems were, rather than starting with the problems which I think can often become depressing.

13.

ÅB: Is there anything else that you would like to add about the school and peace education?

DH: One of the things I have learnt over the last ten years is perhaps just personal to me: it's something about being like a chameleon in terms of changing my colours somewhat in the light of circumstances, which is certainly not changing my substantive concerns and values. For example, quite clearly it's environmental issues that concern people now. So I'm very happy to put my weight and my support behind helping teachers teach about

environmental issues more effectively - which is not to neglect other issues. That is what young people are worried most about at the moment, that is what adults are worried about most at the moment. So in terms of starting with the reality of young people and teachers I would be very happy to start there, but then to spin the way from there to embrace other issues as well.

I also have a hunch, yet to be confirmed, that the year 2000 - the whole thing about moving from one millennium to another - will act as quite a powerful idea or focus for people. We enter into the last decade of a century, the last decade of a millennium - this idea seems to me potentially quite a powerful one for new beginnings and new ideas, and I suspect that during the 90s this focus will be one that surfaces a lot more. I would hope that it will also provide a focus for looking more thoughtfully at what we mean by just and sustainable futures, locally and globally.

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At present "Peace Education Miniprints" will also function as aids in the networking activities of PEC/IPRA (the Peace Education Commission of the International Peace Research Association).

ISSN 1101-6418